Field Experiments Examining the Culture of Honor: The Role of Institutions in Perpetuating Norms About Violence

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Two field experiments illustrate how institutions of the U.S. South and West can help perpetuate violence related to a culture of honor. In Study 1, employers across the United States were sent letters from job applicants who had allegedly killed someone in an honor-related conflict. Southern and western companies were more likely than their northern counterparts to respond in an understanding and cooperative way. In Study 2, newspapers were sent facts for a story concerning a stabbing in response to a family insult. Southern and western papers created stories that were more sympathetic toward the perpetrator and presented his actions as more justified than northern papers did. Control conditions in both studies showed that the greater sympathy of southern and western institutions involves honor-related violence, not all violence or crime in general. Findings highlight the importance of examining the role of institutional behavior in perpetuating culture.

T he standard view of the Old South and West is that these regions accepted, and even glorified, certain types of violence. In these frontier areas where the law was weak, where one's wealth could be rustled away instantly, and where citizens had to depend on themselves for protection, violence—or at least the threat of it—became a powerful force in social interaction. Insults or any challenge indicating that a person could be pushed around had to be met with harsh retaliation so that a man would not be branded an "easy mark."

Anthropologists call societies that hold such violent norms *cultures of honor.* Such cultures have been created independently many times and in many places the world over (Gilmore, 1990; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Schneider, 1971). And the conditions that can give rise to cultures of honor—weak or absent law enforcement, portable (and, therefore, stealable) wealth, economic uncer-

tainty, and high variability of economic outcomes—are present today in pockets all over the world, from the inner cities of the United States to sparsely populated regions of Asia, Europe, and Micronesia. In such societies, in which one is vulnerable to predation, it becomes adaptive for one to adopt a tough, don't-mess-with-me stance.

Many subcultures within the United States can be characterized as possessing some version of a culture of honor, undoubtedly contributing to the high rate of violence in this country. What is striking, however, is not that cultures of honor exist where the conditions that created them are still in place but that some of these cultures continue to persist, even after there may be no functional reason for individuals to behave that way.

The regional cultures of honor in the South and West are good examples of this persistence. For the most part, the South and West are no longer frontier, herding regions where social and economic circumstances make

the culture of honor a functional adaptation. Yet, the cultures in these regions remain strong. In this article, we use two field experiments to demonstrate that the culture of honor continues to exist in the South and the West at an institutional (as well as individual) level. Institutional supports for violence may well "feed back" and help to perpetuate that culture.

Examining Culture

Psychologists are used to studying culture at the level of individual attitudes and behaviors. But as Miller and Prentice (1994) showed, collective norms exist that cannot be derived by simply aggregating individual attitudes. Understanding the collective is not just a matter of assessing the individuals in it and then summing their scores on some dimension (see also Kuran, 1995; Schelling, 1978; Sunstein, 1995). To examine culture, one needs to go beyond the level of the individual and examine public representations (Sperber, 1990). To say that one culture is more violent than another does not mean simply that there are more violent individuals in one culture; it normally means that there are more institutional, social, and collective supports for violence in that culture. Culture exists, and can be studied, at the collective, public level as well as the individual, private level.

Although behaviors are ultimately performed by individuals or groups of individuals, such behaviors can carry profound cultural consequences when they affect institutional policies or public representations. Behavior takes on the imprimatur of cultural approval as people act in their "official" roles. In this way, public representations can feed back and influence what is defined as culturally acceptable, worthy of reward or punishment. In this article, we try to demonstrate two mechanisms by which this happens: (a) the social stigma or lack of stigma for violent acts and (b) media representations of violence as heinous and unacceptable or as justified and understandable.

Persistence of a Culture of Honor in the South and West

There is evidence from a number of different methods that a culture of honor does indeed persist in the modern South and West. Such evidence comes from analyses of homicide records, attitude surveys, laboratory experiments, aggregate behavioral data, and laws and social policies.

The white homicide rates of the South and West far surpass those of the North (see discussions by Baron & Straus, 1988, 1989; Gastil, 1971; Hackney, 1969; Huff-Corzine, Corzine, & Moore, 1986, 1991; Kowalski & Peete, 1991; Land, McCall, & Cohen, 1990; Lee, 1995a; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996, chap. 2; Nisbett, Polly, & Lang,

1995; Reaves & Nisbett, 1995). The differences can be quite dramatic. For example, Nisbett and his colleagues (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996, chap. 2; Nisbett et al., 1995; Reaves & Nisbett, 1995) showed that homicide rates in small towns in the South are triple those of small towns in the North. Importantly, the effect is limited to differences between southern and northern Whites. Regional differences do not exist for Black homicide rates, suggesting that it is something about White southern culture (rather than just living below the Mason-Dixon Line) that elevates southern White homicide rates.

Further, in a more detailed analysis, Nisbett and colleagues (Nisbett, 1993; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Nisbett et al., 1995) showed that it is only conflict-, argument-, or brawl-related homicides—not homicides committed in the context of other felonies such as robbery—that are elevated in the South and West. This pattern was also confirmed by Rice and Goldman (1994), who found not only that southerners were more likely to kill over arguments but also that they were more likely to kill people they knew. "Both of these findings," Rice and Goldman argued, "are consistent with common cultural explanations for southern violence" (p. 381).

In attitude surveys, White southern (and, to a lesser extent, western) respondents are more likely to endorse violence consistent with culture-of-honor norms (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Although they are not more likely to endorse violence of all sorts, they are more likely to endorse it when used for self-protection, to answer an affront, or to socialize children. Ellison (1991) also found that "native southerners are disproportionately inclined to condone defensive or retaliatory forms of violence" (p. 1223). Thus, there seems to be a coherent ideology of violence for southern Whites revolving around culture-of-honor concerns (see also work by Baron & Straus, 1989, pp. 165-169; Ellison & Sherkat, 1993; Reed, 1981).

In laboratory experiments, southern White males respond differently to an insult than do their northern White male counterparts. After they are insulted, southern subjects become more (a) angry, (b) convinced that their masculine reputation has been damaged, (c) cognitively primed for aggression, (d) physiologically stressed and aroused, (e) physiologically prepared for aggression (as indicated by increases in testosterone level), (f) domineering in subsequent encounters with other people, and (g) physically aggressive in their behavior in subsequent challenge situations (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996).

The cultures of the South and (especially) the West are also more likely to approve of violence as shown by subscriptions to violent magazines, viewership of violent television programs, production of college football players, hunting license applications, national guard enroll-

ments, and a number of other indicators in Baron and Straus's (1989) Legitimate Violence Index. Lee (1995a, 1995b) came to a similar conclusion in his analysis of magazine subscription rates, arguing that the West (and, to a lesser extent, the South) was higher in its machismo interests. It was these regions where people were most likely to read magazines "in which physical strength, self-defense, weapons, combat, and sex are prominent themes" (Lee, 1995b, p. 91).

Finally, the laws of the South and West are more likely to endorse violence consistent with a strong ethic of self-protection and honor. Southern and western states are more likely than their northern counterparts to have (a) looser gun control laws, (b) laws allowing people to use violence in defense of self and property (including laws allowing people to stand their ground and kill instead of retreating), and (c) legislators who are more likely to vote hawkishly on national defense issues (Cohen, 1996). The present work supplements this body of research by adding another method—field experiments— to supply more converging, real-world evidence that the South and West possess a culture of honor and, moreover, that this culture has self-sustaining aspects.

STUDY 1: SANCTIONS BY EMPLOYERS FOR AN HONOR-RELATED KILLING

If violence is less stigmatized in the South and West than in the North, then we should see this in institutional practices, such as the hiring of employees. People who have committed crimes of violence in defense of their honor should be seen less as undesirable criminals and more as decent citizens who deserve a break. Thus, if a letter inquiring about employment were sent to companies describing a person who had good credentials but who also had been convicted for honor-related violence, then the letter should receive a warmer, more promising response from companies in the South and West. To provide a tighter test of the hypothesis, organizations in the North, South, and West that were part of the same company chain were compared. Some employers were sent a letter describing an honor-related crime (the homicide condition), and others were sent a control letter describing a crime not involving personal honor (the theft condition).

Method

MATERIALS

Letters inquiring about employment were sent to companies across the United States. The applicant described himself as a qualified, hard-working 27-year-old man who was relocating to the area. In the homicide condition, the third paragraph read as follows:

There is one thing I must explain, because I feel I must be honest and I want no misunderstandings. I have been convicted of a felony, namely manslaughter. You will probably want an explanation for this before you send me an application, so I will provide it. I got into a fight with someone who was having an affair with my fiancée. I lived in a small town, and one night this person confronted me in front of my friends at the bar. He told everyone that he and my fiancée were sleeping together. He laughed at me to my face and asked me to step outside if I was man enough. I was young and didn't want to back down from a challenge in front of everyone. As we went into the alley, he started to attack me. He knocked me down, and he picked up a bottle. I could have run away and the judge said I should have, but my pride wouldn't let me. Instead I picked up a pipe that was laying in the alley and hit him with it. I didn't mean to kill him, but he died a few hours later at the hospital.
I realize that what I did was wrong.

In the theft condition, the third paragraph read as follows:

There is one thing I must explain, because I feel I must be honest and I want no misunderstandings. I have been convicted of a felony, namely motor vehicle theft. You will probably want an explanation for this before you send me an application, so I will provide it. I have no excuse for my behavior. I was young and I needed money. I had a wife and kids and by stealing a couple of expensive cars, I was able to give them what I always needed to give them and pay off the bills I owed. I never intended to cause the car owners any serious trouble. I was sentenced for grand theft auto and am very sorry for my crime. I was desperate but now I realize this is no excuse.
I realize that what I did was wrong.

All letters continued and requested an application for employment, the name and phone number of a contact person, and hours when the applicant might stop by for an interview.

SAMPLE

Procedure for sampling. A letter (of either the honor or theft type) was mailed to 921 organizations. These organizations were businesses that were part of five national chains: a general merchandise store chain, a low-end motel chain, a high-end hotel chain, a family restaurant chain, and a motorcycle dealership chain. The chains were chosen because they represented a diverse cross section of the economy, operated nationwide, and accepted applications by mail. And importantly, we could find listings for the locations of all their outlets in the United States.

The particular businesses were selected by figuring out how many outlets would represent the state (based on its population) and then sampling every *n*th outlet

within that state. Businesses from the South were over-sampled so that this region could be broken out if necessary in the analysis stage. Thus, for each chain, approximately 100 letters were sent to southern companies in that chain, and 100 letters were sent to nonsouthern companies in that chain. (Because not all states had enough stores to fill their quota of letters, there were somewhat less than 1,000 letters sent.)

Following census categorization, we defined the South as Census Divisions 5, 6, and 7: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Washington, D.C., is also defined as the South by the census but was excluded for the studies of this article because it is probably not representative of either northern or southern culture.

The West was defined as Census Divisions 8 and 9, excluding Alaska and Hawaii. (This includes New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, California, Oregon, and Washington.) Alaska and Hawaii were excluded from the West because they do not share the common historical heritage of the region. All other states not in the South or West are obviously in the third category of states. In this article, these states are referred to as *northern* merely as a shorthand way of referring to nonsouthern and nonwestern states. The definitions of these regions are consistent with other work on regional differences and violence (see Baron & Straus, 1988, 1989; Cohen, 1996; Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; Nisbett, 1993; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Nisbett et al., 1995).

After the study was completed, debriefing letters were sent to all organizations, whether they responded to the original letter or not. The debriefing letter contained a brief summary of the study and its purposes. The few employers who contacted us after receiving our debriefing letter were very positive about the study and found the topic quite important.

Response rates. Of the 921 letters sent, 9 were returned as undeliverable. A total of 112 responses were received, for an overall response rate of 12%. Northern companies were more likely to respond to the letters than were southern and western companies, as indicated by logistic regression analysis, $t(908) = 2.93$, $p < .01$. The response rate for the northern-homicide condition was 16% of 149 letters; for northern-theft condition, 17.5% of 154 letters; for southern- and western-homicide condition, 11% of 308 letters; and for southern- and western-theft condition, 9% of 301 letters. One might have expected northern companies to respond more often to a theft letter than to an honor letter, whereas southern and western companies might respond more often to an honor letter than to a theft letter. This was indeed the

pattern, but the interaction was far from significant. This lack of interaction, however, aids us in interpreting the content of the letters. Differential response rates (for which there was no interaction) cannot account for the interaction effects on the compliance and tone indexes that follow.

MEASURES

What is crucial for our purposes is the content of the response letters. An entirely unsympathetic letter basically shuts the door on the applicant, ends communication, and may be worse than no response at all. In contrast, a letter that is cooperative, fills the person's requests, and is generally sympathetic would clearly be positive and an invitation to further communication. This was why we analyzed the responses we received for (a) compliance with requests and (b) the tone of the letter or note (if enclosed).

Compliance, tone, and job availability items. We noted whether each organization complied with the requests of the letter by sending an application, the name of a contact person, the phone number for the contact, and hours or days to stop by. Some potential employers sent back a business card and a note or a letter, and these responses were noted as well. For each of the above items, the organizations received a score of 1 if the response included the item and a 0 if it did not. The scores were then summed over the six items to compute a compliance index.

When a letter was received from an organization, its tone was evaluated by two judges who were blind to condition. The tone items were scored for how encouraging the letter was (4-point scale), how understanding it was (4-point scale), how personal it was (3-point scale), and whether it mentioned an appreciation for the applicant's candor (dichotomous scale). All scores were turned into dichotomous variables (for example, encouraging or not, understanding or not, etc.) and then summed. (Variables were dichotomized because a 0-1 scale was the simplest meaningful metric that could be common to all four items of the tone index.)

On one question, raters also coded how available the note indicated that jobs were in that organization. The codes for this question were as follows: 0 = we cannot hire felons, 1 = there are no jobs now, 2 = there are no jobs now but we will keep your materials on file *or* no mention about jobs, and 3 = there are jobs available.

Coding. Codes for the items of the compliance index (the presence of a note or letter, an application form, etc.) were obvious from inspection. The various measures used to create the compliance index were moderately correlated with each other. Kuder-Richardson formula 20 was used to compute an internal consistency score (analogous to Cronbach's alpha) for the compli-

ance index (r = .48) (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 48; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991, p. 49).

For the tone index, we examined interrater agreement by computing Cohen's Kappas for the dichotomous ratings of how encouraging, understanding, and personal the letters were (Cohen, 1960). Cohen's Kappas were .58, .81, and .79, respectively (all significant at p < .001). Coder scores were averaged together before being combined into a scale. The reliability coefficient for the scale was .76, using Kuder-Richardson formula 20.

For the codings of job availability, nine categories were originally used, but then we collapsed this down to the four ordinal categories indicated above for greater reliability. Because of the objective nature of these categories, an interrater agreement score was not computed, and coder ratings were not averaged together. Rather, any discrepancies in coding (of which there were only five) were resolved by a third coder who was blind to condition.

Results

The prediction was that southern and western companies would be more accepting than northern companies of the homicide letter applicant but that the regions would not differ in their treatment of the theft applicant.[1]

Compliance scores. As may be seen in Table 1, the mean compliance scores differed significantly as a function of region and condition in the way predicted.[2] Compliance scores were approximately equal for both regions (or even slightly higher in the North) for the theft letter. But for the homicide letter, compliance scores were higher for companies in the South and West than for companies in the North. The contrast was significant at p < .06, $t(108)$ = 1.91. The effect size (r = .18) was in the small-to moderate-size range.[3]

Tone index. Letters or notes were enclosed for 78 responses. As may be seen in Table 1, the predicted pattern for the index of the tone items again held. Control letters were responded to with about the same degree of warmth and understanding in all regions. But honor letters were responded to more warmly in the South and West than in the North. The contrast was significant, $t(74)$ = 2.02, p < .05. The effect size (r = .23) was in the small to moderate range.

Job availability. As predicted, there was little difference between northern versus southern and western companies for the theft letter (northern control = 2.0, southern control = 2.05). And as predicted, northern companies were less welcoming for the homicide letter than southern and western companies were (northern honor = 1.71, southern honor = 1.96). However, the standard

TABLE 1: Compliance With Requests, Warmth of Response, and Indication of Job Availability for Honor Applicants and Control Applicants to Companies in the North, South, and West, Study 1

	Honor Letter	*Control Letter*
Compliance index		
North	2.83 (1.27)	3.15 (1.35)
South and West	3.52 (1.39)	2.93 (1.27)
Interaction p < .06		
Tone of response		
North	0.75 (0.83)	1.39 (1.30)
South and West	1.69 (1.59)	1.43 (1.47)
Interaction p < .05		
Job availability item		
North	1.71 (0.61)	2.00 (0.49)
South and West	1.96 (0.36)	2.05 (0.38)
Interaction p < .11		

NOTE: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

contrast was not significant (p level = .11), $t(74)$ = 1.62. The effect size (r = .19) was in the small to moderate range.

Interactions between region, letter type, and organization. The interactions of interest were obviously the Region × Type of Letter interactions. But one might also wonder whether these interactions would be strengthened or weakened, depending on the type of organization that was responding. They were not. The p levels for the three-way interaction between region, letter type, and organization type were all nonsignificant (p > .80 for the compliance index, p > .65 for the tone index, and p > .20 for the job availability item). There were, however, some effects for type of organization (not involving the region variable). Perhaps, these reflect the effects of organizational culture on the employment process and workplace environment (for research on organizational or small-group culture, see, for example, Levine & Moreland, 1991; Lewis, 1989; Martin, 1992; Pratt, 1994; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1996; Schein, 1990; Tichy & Cohen, 1996). Without greater ethnographic information on the organizations in our study, however, speculation about effects involving organization type would have little meaning.

Summary and discussion. In sum, for our measures of tone and compliance, control letters were treated about equally everywhere, whereas the honor letters were responded to more positively in the South and West than in the North. The only item for which the standard contrast did not achieve significance was the job availability item. Perhaps the job availability item was different because it was the response that was most constrained by reality. That is, managers are relatively free to write response letters with any tone that they feel is

appropriate, but it would take an outright lie to say that there is no job when jobs are available. Still, it is probably worth noting that the northern-homicide condition was the only condition in which a manager wrote back that he could not hire felons and in which not a single manager wrote back that jobs were available.

Consistent with this, we might note that perhaps the greatest signs of cultural difference involved the more extreme responses to the letters. In response to the homicide letter, no northern manager sent back a complete package of items, and none received the highest scores on the tone index. In contrast, southern and western employers could be quite warm toward the applicant in the homicide condition: One quarter of all southern and western employers responded to the homicide letter in a way that earned the highest score on the tone index.

A qualitative example may help make this point more vividly. In response to the applicant who had killed the man who provoked him, one southern store owner wrote back that although she had no jobs, she was sympathetic to the man's plight:

> As for your problem of the past, anyone could probably be in the situation you were in. It was just an unfortunate incident that shouldn't be held against you. Your honesty shows that you are sincere. . . .
>
> I wish you the best of luck for your future. You have a positive attitude and a willingness to work. Those are the qualities that businesses look for in an employee. Once you get settled, if you are near here, please stop in and see us.

No letter from a northern employer was anywhere near as sympathetic toward this man who killed in defense of his honor.

STUDY 2: PORTRAYALS OF HONOR-RELATED VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA

In a classic study, Bartlett (1950) showed that as stories are remembered and retold, they are distorted in ways that make sense according to the culture of the listener. We propose that the same phenomenon should occur for northern and southern listeners who are told about an incident involving honor-related violence. Specifically, in retelling a story, southern and western storytellers should be more likely than their northern counterparts to mention provocations and explain the violence in a fashion that is more sympathetic to the perpetrator.

One could examine this phenomenon at the individual level by giving a story to northerners, southerners, and westerners and seeing how they organize and retell it. But one can also examine this phenomenon in a context in which it has potential collective consequences. A reporter working for a newspaper is not just an individual but—acting in an institutional role—also creates a public representation for mass consumption.

The reporter's retelling of the story obviously reaches more people than any given individual's retelling, and by virtue of the paper's status, the story becomes a public representation of the way things are (or should be). News stories are not just objective statements of facts; they are statements of values about what a culture views as relevant, appropriate, and acceptable (see, for example, Binder, 1993; Faludi, 1991; Lee, Hallahan, & Herzog, 1996; Meyers, 1994; Morris & Peng, 1994). Thus, through the power of the reporter's role, private representations become public representations that can feed back on and influence the private representations of others (see Kuran, 1995).

One cannot just compare actual news stories about violence in defense of honor in these regions, because differences in the articles could be due to differences in "objective" facts or in "subjective" interpretations. The present study controlled for this problem by sending out a fact sheet describing a fictional honor-related stabbing to newspapers in the North, West, and South. The papers were asked to turn these events into a story (for pay) as it would appear in the paper. The prediction was that newspapers in the South and West would treat the honor-related violence more sympathetically, portray the violence as more justified, describe the assaulting person as being less blameworthy, and downplay any aggravating circumstances. For this story, we described events revolving around a central culture-of-honor concern— namely, insults or attacks against female family members (Fiske, Markus, Kitayama, & Nisbett, in press). Wyatt-Brown (1982, p. 53) described how insults against female members of the family were treated with utmost seriousness in the Old South, and Cohen and Nisbett (1994) showed that this is still true today.

A control story giving facts for a violent crime that was not honor related allowed for a tighter test of the hypothesis. We expected that stories written by southerners, westerners, and northerners would not differ in the degree of sympathy expressed for such a crime.

College newspapers were used because we assumed compliance rates would be higher for them than for professional newspapers. This probably provides for a conservative test of our hypothesis, because college newspapers (relative to rural papers, for example) are written by and produced for a more liberal segment of the population. There was also another advantage to using college newspapers, as these papers were overwhelmingly staffed by reporters who grew up in the same region where they went to school.

Method

MATERIALS

We created a set of facts to be used as the basis for two news stories and sent them to college newspapers across the country. A cover letter explained that the research concerned how newspapers turn a collection of facts into a news story. The letter said it would probably take about 1 hr to turn the facts into news stories and offered the reporter or the general fund of the paper $25 for the help. Thus, reporters knew they were participating in a study (although they were blind to its purpose and hypotheses). The stories had to include a headline and be no longer than 250 words each. A brief questionnaire also asked how much space the paper would allot each story and for demographic information about the reporter.

The fact sheets contained many miscellaneous facts, as well as some that were highly relevant for a culture-of-honor interpretation. Some of the salient facts from the stories are summarized here:[4]

Honor story. Victor Jensen stabbed Martin Shell. Jensen is a 28-year-old Caucasian who works as a janitor at Warren High School, and Shell is a 27-year-old Caucasian who works as a mechanic at the Bradley GM car dealership. Shell is currently in stable condition at Mercy Hospital after last night's incident.

Shell dated Jensen's sister, Ann, for about a month, but they broke up a few weeks before the party. Ann was present at the party, but she was not involved in the stabbing.

Witnesses told police that Shell and Jensen talked to each other throughout the evening. Around 1:30 a.m., Shell spilled a glass of beer on Jensen's pants. The two began arguing and had to be separated by others at the party. Shell shouted that Jensen's sister, Ann, was "a slut." Jensen then started to walk toward Shell but was restrained by three other people at the party. Several men at the party were heard to make comments about what they would do if someone said that about their sister.

Around 1:45 a.m., Jensen left the party. As Jensen was leaving, Shell and his friends laughed at Jensen. Shell then shouted that both Jensen's sister and mother were "sluts." When Jensen returned to the party around 1:55 a.m., he demanded that Shell take back his comments "or else." Shell laughed at Jensen and said, "Or else what, Rambo?" Jensen then pulled a 4-in. knife out of his jacket and stabbed Shell twice. Shell was unarmed at the time of the stabbing.

Several quotes expressing opinions about the incident from both Jensen's and Shell's statements to police were also included.

Control story. Robert Hansen pistol-whipped John Seger. Seger was working at a 7-11 convenience store when Hansen robbed the store and pistol-whipped Seger. Hansen took the $75 that was in the cash register and a carton of cigarettes. Seger is a 22-year-old Caucasian and is in stable condition at Mercy Hospital. Hansen is a 19-year-old Caucasian and is in custody at the Washtenaw County Jail. Hansen was convicted on a charge of simple assault 6 months ago and served 2 days in jail.

According to the police report about the robbery, Hansen showed the pistol and demanded that Seger open the store's safe. The pistol was not loaded, according to police. Seger told Hansen that he did not know the combination to the safe, and he offered Hansen the $75 in the cash register.

Seger tried to open the safe but kept insisting he did not know the combination. Hansen then pistol-whipped Seger, striking him five times in the head with the butt of his weapon. When Seger fell to the ground, Hansen spit on him, swore at him, and kicked him in the stomach.

Several quotes from Hansen's and Seger's statements to the police were given, including a few from Hansen stating that money was stolen from him earlier in the evening and he was mad about that.

SAMPLE

Sampling was done from a list of colleges in the *1994 World Almanac* (Famighetti, 1993). Once a college was selected, its student newspaper was found through a listing in the *1994 Editor and Publisher Yearbook* (I. Anderson, 1994). To be eligible for selection, a college had to be a 4-year school and have a student enrollment of at least 5,000.

A total of 303 letters were sent out to colleges across the country. No region of the country was oversampled; 154 letters went to colleges in the North, 53 went to colleges in the West, and 96 went to colleges in the South. Responses were received from 47 schools in the North (31%), 15 schools in the West (28%), and 32 schools in the South (33%). Of the 94 responses that were received, 83 were written by White reporters. It is only the White responses that are reported below, because previous research indicates that the relevant regional differences may exist only among Whites (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Nisbett et al., 1995).

Consistent with previous research focusing on White non-Jewish populations, we excluded predominantly Jewish and historically Black schools from our sample (Cohen, Nisbett, et al., 1996; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). We also excluded schools located in Washington, D.C. (because this region is representative of neither northern nor southern culture) and University of Michigan schools (because of the remote possibility that a reporter might be familiar with our hypotheses).

MEASURES

Three coders rated the honor and control stories for tone and content. The coders were not blind to the experimental hypotheses or, obviously, to the type of story—honor versus control—but they were blind to what region the story came from.

We computed a justification index, examining whether writers reported or ignored nine key facts relevant to determining how justified the attack was. We constructed the index by giving papers a point for mentioning each act Shell took to provoke Jensen and a point for ignoring each act that aggravated the nature of Jensen's crime. The six actions that Shell took to provoke Jensen were spilling beer on him, insulting his sister once, insulting her again, laughing at him, insulting his mother, and laughing at him or insulting him when he asked for a retraction. The three aggravating circumstances to Jensen's crime were that Jensen returned to the party 10 min, or some time later, with a knife (suggesting premeditation); that Jensen stabbed Shell twice (or multiple times); and that Shell was unarmed at the time he was attacked. The items in the justification index were dichotomously scored, and the index had an internal consistency score of $r = .49$, using Kuder-Richardson formula 20. (Because of the objective nature of the items—a fact was either mentioned or it was not—an interjudge reliability score was not computed.)

We also computed a blameworthiness index. Coders rated the tone of the article on several dimensions: whether the most important factor leading to the stabbing seemed to be an insult from Shell to Jensen (vs. an argument between the two), whether the incident that started the whole conflict seemed to be a provocation from Shell to Jensen (vs. an argument between the two), whether Shell or Jensen seemed to be more at fault, whether the focus of the story was on the person doing the provoking or the person who did the stabbing (thus emphasizing either the situational or the dispositional causes of the attack), whether Shell could be characterized as an innocent victim or someone who got what he deserved, whether Jensen could be characterized as a hothead or a man defending his honor, and whether the story in general could be characterized as being about a psycho or a hothead or a man defending his honor. The intraclass correlation for judges' ratings was .77, as given by Shrout and Fleiss's (1979) formula (3,1). Judges' ratings were averaged together to form the final index. The alpha coefficient for this index, reflecting how well the individual items held together, was .89. Higher numbers on the index indicated more blameworthiness.

Also, there was one question for both the honor and the control story that asked judges to rate (on a 4-point scale) how sympathetically each story portrayed the of-

TABLE 2: Justification and Blameworthiness Indexes for the Honor Story for Papers in the North, South, and West, Study 2

	North	South and West	p <
Justification index	3.37 (1.87)	4.21 (1.43)	.02
Blameworthiness index	0.17 (0.75)	−0.10 (0.68)	.09

NOTE: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

fender. We analyzed these data using a 2 × 2 ANOVA with region as one factor and type of crime as the other. (Justification and blameworthiness indexes were not analyzed using an interaction strategy because there were no justification or blameworthiness items in the control story that were directly analogous to those in the honor story. The control story was, after all, a classic felony assault.) Based on the difference scores of sympathy for the honor offender minus sympathy for the control offender, we also categorized newspapers into those that treated the honor-related offender more sympathetically than the control offender and those that did not. For the categorizations, the associated pairwise Kappas for the three judges were .56, .26, and .21, all significant at $p < .05$.

Finally, in addition to rating the actual story, judges also rated just the lead and headline of the story. Thus, they scored whether insult, argument, or honor were mentioned in the headline or first sentence. And they rated whether the headline or first sentence seemed to indicate that the story was about a psycho or a hothead or a man defending his honor. Judges also examined the use of quotes by Shell and Jensen (some of which related to an honor theme and some of which did not).

For the control story, judges rated the content and tone of the story on a number of dimensions—for example, whether the robbery or the beating seemed to be the focus of the story, whether different circumstances of the crime were mentioned, whether different aspects of Hansen's background were mentioned, and whether different quotes from Hansen and Seger were used. The regions were not predicted to differ in their treatment of the control story.

Results and Discussion

Justification. As may be seen in the first line of Table 2, southern and western papers were likely to see the crime as more provoked and less aggravated than their northern counterparts did, $t(81) = 2.33$, $p < .02$. This effect was of moderate size, $d = .51$.[5]

Blameworthiness. As may be seen in the second line of Table 2, in the tone of their articles, southern and western papers were less likely to blame Jensen for stabbing Shell than northern papers were, $t(81) = 1.74$, $p <$

.09. The effect size ($d = .38$) was in the small to moderate range.

Sympathy. Examining the raw sympathy scores for each story, there was a trend for southern and western papers to treat the honor-related offender more sympathetically and for northern papers to treat the non-honor-related offender more sympathetically, interaction $F(1, 79) = 2.17$, $p < .15$ (effect size, $r = .16$, was in the small to moderate range). If papers are simply categorized according to which offender they treated most sympathetically, we found that only 19% of southern and western papers treated the nonhonor crime at least as sympathetically as the honor crime, whereas twice as many northern papers (39%) did so, $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = 4.03$, $p < .04$. The effect size measure for the χ^2 statistic, w, was .22, or in the small to moderate range (Cohen, 1977, chap. 7).

Leads, headlines, and quotes. There were no significant differences in the content of the lead sentence and headline or in the use of quotes by Shell and Jensen.

Control story. Although there were several differences in how papers across the country treated the honor-related story, there were virtually no differences in how they treated the control story. Only three items showed even marginally significant differences, and these three indicated that northern papers showed more sympathy than southern and western papers for the man who beat the clerk during the robbery. Thus, the differences found on the story concerning honor-related violence do not reflect an approval of all sorts of violence; rather, they reflect a sympathy among southern and western papers that is specifically focused on honor-related violence.

Demographic items. Demographic information requested at the end of the questionnaire revealed few differences among reporters from the different regions. Their newspapers did not differ in the size of their circulation, nor did the reporters differ in their age, sex, or year in school. Thus, controlling for circulation, gender, age, and year in school using multiple regression equations changed the results very little.

Controlling for demographics also made little difference because the demographic variables were themselves relatively uncorrelated with our dependent variables of justification, blameworthiness, and sympathy. Using multiple regressions, we found only a weak tendency for men to assign less blame than women to the honor-related offender. Effects of age, year in school, and the paper's circulation on our dependent variables were very slight. Race was also not a confound in these data because we analyzed only the 83 White respondents. Results were similar, however, if the 11 non-White respondents were added to the analysis.

Demographic questions also revealed that most reporters had grown up in the region in which they were currently attending school. Indeed, there were only two cases in which southern and western reporters wrote for northern papers and only three cases in which northern reporters wrote for southern and western papers.

In summary, the papers of the South and West treated honor-related violence more sympathetically in both tone and content than did the papers of the North. The articles from the South and West portrayed the honor-related violence as more justified, less aggravated, and more the fault of the provoker. The control stories indicated that papers of the South and West were not more sympathetic toward violence in general but that sympathy was limited to honor-related violence.

DISCUSSION

The results of these two field experiments indicate that violence related to honor is less stigmatized by institutions of the South and West than by those of the North. In Study 1, southern and western employers responded in a warmer, more sympathetic, and more cooperative way to a person convicted of an honor-related killing than they did to a person convicted of a non-honor-related crime. The reverse was true of northern employers. In Study 2, southern and western newspapers treated a violent crime in defense of honor in a more sympathetic and understanding way than did northern newspapers. As predicted, no differences were found for a story concerning violence not related to honor.

A few issues and concerns should be noted here. One ethical concern is the deception used in Study 1. Although it would have been nice if organizations had known up front that they were involved in a study, one might wonder whether the results of Study 1 would be very convincing if they had been so informed. Deception was used in this field experiment because there is no reason to assume that people are aware of—or would truthfully report—the values guiding their behavior toward job applicants with various histories. Starting with LaPiere's (1934) research, it has been shown that the real behavior of workers within an organization is often poorly reflected by its professed values and that "as if" questions may provide poor guides to actual practices. In more recent times, Salancik (1979) argued that it is often necessary to use experimentation to "stimulate" an organization and discover its true orientation. Deception in this case was mild and required little effort from experimental participants—sending application forms and, in some cases, a brief note. The costs and benefits must be weighed in deciding whether to use deception, and obviously, reasonable people can and will disagree

on whether a study merits its use. In this case, we felt it did.

A more theoretical concern involves the interpretation of the present two studies. Some readers might wonder about the distinction between a culture of honor and a macho culture. Such concerns should be put in context by noting that macho culture is a version of a more general culture of honor (Gilmore, 1990). That is, all cultures of honor emphasize masculinity, toughness, and the ability to protect one's own. Cultures of honor differ from each other, however, in the amount of swagger and attitude they require versus the amount of politeness and gentility they require (E. Anderson, 1994; Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1996; Pitt-Rivers, 1965, 1968). Differences between such cultures are interesting and need exploration, but they are all still rightfully considered variations of a general culture of honor.

On a more concrete level, there are some concerns having to do with specific aspects of the studies in this article. One concern involves whether the results can be generalized to real behavior. This certainly is not an issue for Study 1, in which people thought they were responding to real job applicants. It is of some concern for Study 2, in which it is possible that different results would be obtained if reporters were not aware they were participating in a study. (This is obviously the flip side of the ethical issue involving deception discussed above.)

There are plausible hypotheses for why reporters writing a real story might produce stories that muted their own personal bias. However, it is also quite possible that if reporters were writing a real story, the salience of the audience might cause them to be even more sensitive to prevailing cultural norms, and thus regional differences would become even more magnified (see Kuran, 1995). A nice follow-up study might involve examining how actual news stories (of some notoriety) are treated by correspondents from newspapers around the nation. In addition, if one were concerned with editing and presentation issues, then one could examine how wire stories—from the Associated Press, for example—were cut, restructured, and played up or played down by various papers across the country. Such studies might provide details about the process by which news is "distorted."

Another concern has to do with the actual effects in this article. They are not large. In fact, they are almost uniformly in the small to moderate range, using Cohen's (1977) criteria. But it is their consistency—within this package of two studies and together with the results of our lab experiments, archival studies, and attitude surveys—that give us confidence in the results (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

Finally, there is the issue of the representativeness of the organizations that responded in both studies. A

problem with field experiments is that the response rate can be relatively low. And perhaps this was to be expected given the nature of our requests here. In Study 1, for example, it is possible that the low response rate from this study was due to the applicant in both cases having a criminal record. Although low response rates are problematic, there are two major reasons for why our concerns with this are tempered. First, concerns are allayed to some extent by the comparability of responses in the control conditions of both experiments. The non-honor-related crime was treated equivalently by employers and by newspapers in the North, West, and South, suggesting that any response bias probably affected all regions equally. And also, our concerns are tempered to a larger extent by placing the studies in their broader context. Again, the field experiments presented here give results very consistent with a line of research by Nisbett, Cohen, Reaves, and others, pointing to systematic cultural differences between the South and West versus the North. Through attitude surveys, analyses of laws and social policies, homicide records, and lab experiments, this research has established the existence of regional differences in matters having to do with violence and gender roles. The two field experiments fit well with this line of work, adding to the evidence and suggesting some institutional mechanisms through which the cultures of the South and West are perpetuated.

Study 1 tells us something about the sort of feedback given to men who have committed crimes of violence related to honor. Feedback from northern employers is more likely to convey to such men that they are undesirable, unsympathetic, and unforgiven for their crimes, whereas feedback from southern employers is more likely to convey to these men that they are normal people who got caught in unfortunate situations—situations that "anyone" could have been in—and that their behavior in those situations "shouldn't be held against" them (as one southern letter writer indicated). Thus, Study 1 shows that institutions—as well as individuals—participate in the stigmatization, or lack of stigmatization, of violence.

Our speculation is that Study 1 underestimates regional differences regarding how men who perpetuate culture-of-honor violence are treated. At an early stage of the application process ("please send me an application and information"), most national chains probably have either (a) a policy of treating all applicants equally or (b) a policy of treating convicted felons more harshly than other applicants, regardless of what crime they committed. If so, then the opportunity for differential treatment would have been constrained in this study. Thus, one might expect to see even more differential treatment in institutional and especially in interpersonal situations in which there were not such constraints. Consider, for example, everyday social interactions, per-

sonal relationships, less formal organizational settings, or other situations in which association is more voluntary. As one Texas hotel manager called to tell us after receiving the debriefing letter, he had a lot of "empathy" as a person with the man who fought after the "dishonoring of his girlfriend." And he "would not have a problem with this guy being my neighbor, having my kids go over and play in his yard . . . getting to know him. But as an employer, I can't hire him" because of the legal issues involved. We suspect, then, that the feedback and stigmatization (or lack of it) evidenced in Study 1 would be greatly amplified in many less constrained interpersonal and institutional settings in the real world.

Study 2 indicates another way in which institutions can contribute to collective representations that support violence. By treating violence as sympathetic, justified, or legitimately provoked, the media can help feed cultural notions about when such behavior is appropriate. And Study 2 demonstrates that there are clear cultural differences in how papers of the North, West, and South present honor-related violence and explain it to their readers.

Newspapers are just one source of collective storytelling, however. It seems remarkable that such differences were found between the stories of the South and West and stories of the North when both sets of newspapers were given the exact same facts. Newspapers are institutions that are supposed to report such stories objectively and according to journalistic formula. One can only imagine what would happen on the next iterations—as readers not bound by a journalist's sense of objectivity and closeness to the facts retell the story to others, who then retell the story to still others, who then retell the story, and so on. As this game of "telephone" continues and stories spread throughout a community, stories would probably stray further and further from the facts and become molded into culturally prescribed myths. These communal myths could both reflect the biases of the culture and serve to perpetuate it—defining some violent actions as sympathetic or even heroic (for discussions of public narratives and communal experiences, see also Bartlett, 1950, p. 173; Faludi, 1991, chap. 1; Gates, 1995).

Researchers in cultural psychology need to examine all sorts of mechanisms by which a culture gets perpetuated—interpersonal interactions, familial socialization, and real or imagined peer enforcement of norms. We also cannot forget that we live our lives constrained by institutions—our media, our workplaces, our legal system, and our economic system. In this light, the mutually reinforcing effects of culture and social structure are extremely important to examine. Just as culture and the individual mind reinforce and strengthen each other

(Fiske et al., 1997), so, too, do culture and our social structures.

Presently, we are a long way from understanding the mechanisms through which institutions (or even individuals) perpetuate a culture of honor. However, these field experiments—seen in the context of the laboratory experiments, attitude surveys, policy analyses, and homicide data—suggest that institutions, such as corporations and the media, at least reflect the norms of their culture. As a consequence, they may produce public representations that perpetuate the culture and keep it strong even after the culture has outlived its original purpose.

NOTES

1. The appropriate contrast to test this prediction is +1, −1, 0, 0 (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985). Effect size measures for the interaction contrast follow formulas given by Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991, p. 470), and interpretations of their magnitude follow Cohen's (1977) conventions.

2. All p levels are two-tailed.

3. The contrast reported in the text puts together companies from the South with those of the West. This was done because the small number of responses from the West ($n = 14$) could make estimates unreliable. Nevertheless, analyses that examine the North, West, and South separately—using a contrast of −2, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0—give similar results. This contrast gives significance levels of $p < .02$ for the compliance index and $p < .06$ for the analysis of the tone of the letters.

4. The complete set of facts for the stories—as well as information about means and standard deviations for individual items from Studies 1 and 2—can be obtained by corresponding with the first author.

5. Data in Study 2 were analyzed with t tests between papers of the North versus papers of the South and West. Again, this was done because the small number of western responses ($n = 12$) could make estimates unreliable. However, results look very similar if the papers are separated into three regions—North, West, and South—and a contrast of −2, +1, +1 is used. The p levels for the main variables using this contrast were as follows: justification index, $p < .005$; blameworthiness index, $p < .05$; greater sympathy for the offender in the honor story versus the control story, $p < .03$. In general, responses from the West tended to be even stronger than those from the South.

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